by the Indian Missions concerned in the range of US $ 300-350, after taking into account the prevailing market wage in that country and is intended to serve as a bench mark for the Indian Missions for attesting work contracts and for the Protectors of Emigrants before granting emigration clearance.

(iv) Introduction of a pre-departure orientation and skill-upgradation programme for potential emigrants to enhance their empowerment.

(v) A massive media campaign has been launched to educate the potential emigrants.

(vi) Overseas Workers Resource Centre has been established with a toll-free helpline to help the emigrants.

(vii) The Emigration Act, 1983 is in the process of being amended to further strengthen the safeguards for the emigrants.

Women deserted by NRI husband

1479. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of Indian women have been divorced/deserted by NRI husbands;

(b) if so, whether it is proposed to take us the issue of subsistance/maintenance allowance to those women with countries where the husbands are residing;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has received 230 complaints from Indian women against divorce/desertion by their overseas Indian spouses.

(b) and (c) No, Sir.

(d) Grant of subsistence allowance to affected women is governed by the legal provisions on the subject in any country and is admissible as per the court's directives. The Ministry has launched a scheme to provide legal assistance to Indian women divorced/deserted by their overseas Indian spouses to enable them take up their cases in relevant court(s) in the country concerned. Details of the scheme for giving legal/financial assistance to women deserted by their overseas Indian spouses are enclosed.

Statement

Scheme for Giving Legal/Financial Assistance to Women Deserted by their Overseas Indian Spouses

I. Objective:

The objective of the scheme is to provide some financial assistance to needy women in distress who have been deserted by their overseas Indian spouses for obtaining counseling and legal services. The term "Overseas Indian" would include NRIs and foreign citizens of Indian origin. The counseling and legal services would be provided through credible Indian

Women's Organizations/Indian Community Associations and NGOs identified for providing such services and empanelled with the Indian Missions in the **USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Gulf.** The scheme is a welfare measures to support women of Indian origin in distress, through the mobilization of the local Indian community in the endeavor and with some financial assistance from the Government.

II. Scope of and Eligibility for the Scheme:

The scheme would be available to the women who have been deserted by their overseas Indian spouses or are facing divorce proceedings in a foreign country subject to the following conditions:-

(i) The woman is an Indian passport holder.

(ii) The marriage of the woman has been solemnized in India.

(iii) The women is deserted in India or after reaching abroad with **five years** of the marriage.

(iv) Divorce proceedings are initiated within **five years** of the marriage by her overseas Indian spouse.

(v) An ex-parte divorce has been obtained by the overseas Indian spouse within 10 years of marriage and a case for maintenance and alimony is to be filed.

(vi) The scheme would not be available to a woman facing criminal charges or having a criminal case decided against her.

(vii) The domicile of the woman seeking relief under the scheme is not relevant for allowing the benefit. The woman may be domiciled in the country of her overseas Indian spouse or in India at the time of making the application.

(viii) Preference may be given to applicants on the basis of financial needs.

(ix) Assistance will be limited to meeting initial cost and incidental charges for documentation and filing of the case by the Indian women's organization/NGO on the woman's behalf.

(x) The assistance will be limited to US $ 1000 per case and will be released to the Indian community organizations/NGO concerned to enable it to take steps to assist the woman in documentation and preparatory work for filing the case.

(xi) The women's organization/NGO will make efforts to enlist community advocates, preferably women advocates, to extend further legal assistance/appearance in court etc. on a pro-bono basis.

III. Pattern of Assistance

Under the scheme Indian Missions in the countries concerned would empanel cerebile Indian Women's Organizations/ Indian Community Associations/NGOs and their member advocates, preferably women, to provide legal aid to the victims in distress and whose names have been approved by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. The applications for providing legal aid received by the Missions would be examined by an officer designated by the Head of the Mission on case-to-case basis and approved by Head of Mission/Deputy Chief of the Mission.

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The applications received in the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs will be examined by an internal committee consisting of a legal advisor and an officer of the rank of Director/ Deputy Secretary and approved by Secretary. Thereafter, the Ministry will recommend the case of Mission concerned to provide legal aid support. The applicant would also be informed to approach the Mission concerned in this regard.

Application for Hague Convention

1480. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has applied to be a signatory in the Hague Convention;

(b) if so, the status of the application; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) India is a party to the following Hague Conventions:

1. Convention of 5 October 1961 Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents.
2. Convention of 15 November 1965 on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters.
3. Convention of 18 March 1970 on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters.
4. Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Inter Country Adoption.

However, India is not yet a Member of the Hague Conference. Its request for it has been approved by the member states of the Hague Conference under the provisions of the Statute of the Hague Conference. India's Instrument of Accession has been forwarded to the Indian Embassy at the Hague for deposit with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Opening of Facilitation Centres

1481. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has opened/running facilitation Centres for the Peoples' of Indian Origin (PIO);

(b) if so, the details thereof showing the number of such centres, its locations, activities and functions etc.; and

(c) if not, whether Government is proposing/planning to open such centres and by when and the various locations where it is to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) Minisry of Overseas Indian Affairs has set up an Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) as a not-for-profit Trust under the Indian Trust Act, 1982, in partnership with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), for serving the interests of overseas Indians.